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SUBJECT: URF ANNOUNCES FINAL CONSOLIDATION

REF: A) NDJAMENA 117  
B) TRIPOLI 281

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Summary  
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¶1. (SBU) Four months after the close of SPLM-hosted Darfur movement consolidation talks in Juba, the United Resistance Front (URF) has announced its final consolidation. The coalition represents five factions that includes Massaleit and Arab representatives but is dominated by Zaghawa JEM/Collective Leadership. The announcement brings the total number of major Darfur rebel movements down to five: URF, Khalil Ibrahim's Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), Adelwahid Nur's SLM faction, Ahmed Abdelshafie's SLM faction, and Abdallah Yahyia's SLA/Unity. The latter group is being actively courted by the URF, though to mixed success. The URF's stated demands for any forthcoming peace agreement include a unified Darfur region; concrete commitments to development to facilitate IDP returns; effective, population-based power distribution; URF absorption into the SAF; comprehensive wealth-sharing principles to include hawakir (traditional land tenure); and reinstitution of Darfur's borders as of 1956. END SUMMARY.

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URF Structure Finalized  
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¶2. (SBU) The United Resistance Front (URF) announced its leadership structure during an April 8 press conference in Juba. The movement is a conglomerate of five separate movements: the Arab-dominated United Revolutionary Forces Front (URFF), SLA-Field Command, the National Movement for Reform and Development (NMRD), SLA-Khamis Abdullah, and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM)/Collective Leadership. The URF leadership structure is composed of three councils: a "Collective Presidency," a "United Military Command," and a general secretariat. Members of these three organs include, respectively, Bahar Idriss Abu Gharda, Khamis Abdullah Abubaker, Ibrahim Ahmed Abuzadein, Sharif Adam Mansour, and Adam Ali Shogar in the presidency; Adam Bahkeit, the "Vice Commander-in-Chief for Supervisory Administration" name unknown, Yacine Yousuf (Logistics), Abdelrahman Mousa (Training), and Abdullah Banda (Operations) in the military command; and Mansour el Bab and Mansour Ibrahim in the general secretariat. In addition to these three councils, there are three oversight organs: a sixty-one person Consultative Monitoring Council, a Convention Council, and an Administrative Cell. El Hadi el Jebr Duar is the movement's spokesperson, and Sharif Adam Mosul is the Secretary General.

¶3. (SBU) Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) Darfur Taskforce Chairman and Deputy Secretary General Abdelaziz Helou opened the

press conference by noting that while the URF "could have announced anywhere, they chose to return to Juba to give credit to the SPLM." He called on the URF to consider unification with the remaining Darfur movements, and called on SLA/Unity leader Abdullah Yahya, SLA faction leader Abdelwahid Nur, JEM leader Khalil Ibrahim, and Ahmed Abdelshafie to do the same. "If these five movements agree to further pursue the process of unification, there are good prospects that a complete unification under one umbrella can be achieved."

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URF Demands for Peace  
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¶4. (SBU) According to URF Collective Presidency Chairman Bahar Idriss Abu Gharda, the movements demands the following as part of any political settlement: unification of the three Darfur states into a single region; a commitment to development in the region to facilitate IDP returns; equitable power distribution based on Darfur's population; integration of the URF into the SAF; comprehensive wealth-sharing principles to include hawakir (traditional land rights); and reinstitution of Darfur's 1956 border. Abu Gharda noted that the URF is ready for peace talks "if Khartoum is ready, but should Khartoum opt for other courses of action, the URF is prepared to counter." The movement characterized Khartoum as unable to commit to "reasonable peace talks" given ongoing attempts by the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) to retake rebel-held territory in Darfur.

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Electoral Alliance with SPLM  
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¶5. (SBU) Asked whether the URF would align with the SPLM in an electoral coalition, Abu Gharda was evasive in his answer. "All marginalized people of Sudan benefit from the efforts of the SPLM, but our focus is now on bringing stability to Darfur and its people." (Note: Per Ref. A, Abu Gharda has previously committed to "full coordination" with the SPLM on an election strategy, including

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the possible postponement of elections if the SPLM takes this track.  
End note.)

¶6. (SBU) SPLM Taskforce Chairman Abdelaziz Helou noted that SPLM participation in the coming peace talks was paramount. "SPLM knows very well the suffering of the Darfur people and plans to participate in the talks as full partners in the GNU." He further detailed SPLM actions to contribute to a durable peace in Darfur. "While we participated in Abuja, we had no control. Now the SPLM fights in two fields: We push for the unification of the movements in order that they have a joint negotiating position, and we negotiate with the NCP in order that the GNU adopts a common position reflective of NCP and SPLM views before the peace talks begin."

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No Census Before Peace  
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¶7. (SBU) When asked about the April 15 national census and whether the URF supported it being carried out in Darfur, Abu Gharda noted that the URF is not part of the "census-making process," but that the security situation is not conducive to a census and that the focus now needs to be on consolidation of the movements and forthcoming peace talks. The census and elections should be considered only after a peace settlement is achieved.

¶8. (SBU) SPLM Deputy Secretary General Anne Itto attempted to redirect Abu Gharda's response, reiterating the socio-economic importance of the census for "all Sudanese" and calling on the Government of National Unity (GNU) to enact and abide by a ceasefire for the duration of the count. "We are aware of the security situation in Darfur and recognize that it may not be able to get a fair count." Responding to a follow-on question about the still-unresolved standoff over lack of questions about ethnicity and religion, Itto noted that "recognition of the diversity of Sudan is what the SPLM fought for, and what is being fought for now in

Darfur. The SPLM will not consider the census to be official should questions on religion and ethnicity be excluded." Note: These comments were made before the SPLM announced on April 13 that they would postpone the census. End note.)

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Prospects for Further Rebel Unity  
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¶9. (SBU) At a private dinner following the press conference, URF Secretary General Sharif Adam Mosul told ConGen PolOff that

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"slightly more than forty-eight hours" before the April 8 URF announcement, field commanders representing Abdullah Yahya's SLA/Unity signed an accord with the URF to join the rebel coalition.

Mosul maintained the URF had withheld announcing this fact during the press conference because they were waiting on direct discussions between Yehia and Abu Gharda and for Yahya's commitment in writing. URF de-facto external affairs secretary Tadjedine Niam appeared displeased with Mosul's revelation to PolOff and allowed only that talks with SLA/Unity are going "quite well, better than most had expected." Mosul continued, noting that "with Yahya on board, once we get Abdelshafie we will represent seventy percent of Darfur." (Note: Most independent analysts believe Abdelshafie to be near irrelevance in both political and military terms, though he has long-standing ties to the SPLM. End note.)

¶10. (SBU) ConGen PolOff noted that Abdelshafie had shown a preference for unification in a different direction -- with URF moving into his SLM faction. Interlocutors criticized bitterly the threat that "fanatical egos" posed to peace in Darfur. "Khalil Ibrahim is pursuing an isolationist position that does nothing for Darfur and feeds him right into the palms of the NCP," Niam noted. While Niam and others termed Ahmed Abdelshafie "more manageable," Niam argued that comprehensive unification was not necessary for a successful political settlement.

¶11. (SBU) In marked contrast to public statements at the press conference, URF officials spoke openly about the prospects for Darfur/SPLM or even URF/SPLM coordination during the upcoming elections. Secretary General Mosul (by far, the most optimistic of the dinner guests) noted that should there be a peace agreement in Darfur, an electoral coalition would be possible.

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Comment  
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¶12. (SBU) While the presence of the URFF and SLA/Khamis Abdullah under the umbrella movement add Arab and Massaleit elements, the URF remains dominated by the Zaghawa of JEM/CL previously affiliated with Khalil Ibrahim's JEM. SLA/Unity's position on a coalition with

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the URF remains unclear, however, with some elements indifferent and other key SLA/Unity leaders preferring further consultation with field commanders before any formal commitment (Ref. B). End comment.

¶13. (U) Tripoli minimize considered.

FERNANDEZ